United Nations A/50/PV.75

General Assembly
Fiftieth Session

Official Records

75th plenary meeting
Thursday, 30 November 1995, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Diogo Freitas do Amaral ..... (Portugal)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Al-Ashtal (Yemen), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Agenda item 42 (*continued*)

Question of Palestine

Report of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People (A/50/35)

Report of the Secretary-General (A/50/725)

Mr. Laclaustra (Spain) *(interpretation from Spanish)*: I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. Cyprus, Slovakia, Hungary and Romania also associate themselves with this statement.

The signing of the Declaration of Principles by Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) on 13 September 1993, and subsequent progress in the peace process, allow us to speak about a real possibility of resolving the Palestinian question, which is at the centre of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

The European Union welcomes the successful withdrawal of the Israeli security forces from the city of Jenin. This withdrawal is the first tangible result of the historic Interim Agreement on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, signed by Israel and the PLO on 28 September, of which the European Union was a witness.

Following the signing of the Interim Agreement on self-government between Israel and the PLO, the peace process in the Middle East has entered a crucial phase, which involves risks and opportunities. There is a risk of continuing acts of violence, but there is also — and this is most important — an opportunity for increased political development and economic progress for the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

The European Union reaffirms its commitment to a just, comprehensive and lasting settlement of the question of Palestine and the Arab-Israeli conflict as a whole, based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978) and within the framework of the principles of international law. We intend to continue playing an active, constructive and balanced role in support of the Middle East peace process. We are determined to contribute to the success of this process, and we shall give both political and material support for this purpose, closely cooperating with all the regional interlocutors, the co-sponsors of the peace process and the participants in competent multilateral forums.

In the context of the European Union's common foreign and security policy, joint action to support the Middle East peace process was approved on 19 April 1994. In the framework of this joint action, the European Union has agreed to participate in monitoring elections to the Palestinian Council and in coordinating the international monitoring mission. Mr. Carl Lidbom, former Minister of Justice and Trade of Sweden, has been appointed to lead the European Electoral Unit established at the beginning of November 1995.

95-86862 (E)

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The European Union as a whole continues to be the principal donor of funds to the Palestinians. With the main aim of assisting the consolidation of the Palestinian Authority and improving the living conditions of the Palestinians, we have promised 500 million ECUs in aid for the period 1994-1999.

At the meeting of the Special Liaison Committee held in Paris in April, we undertook to provide a new financial aid package for the Palestinian Authority totalling $25 million, to come from the Community budget and national budgets.

On 9 December 1995 the second Conference on assistance to the Palestinian people will be held in Paris. The Conference will concentrate on tackling macroeconomic needs and on adopting a revised Tripartite Action Plan, defining the respective responsibilities of the Palestinians, the Israelis and the international donor community.

The European Union firmly believes that the development of the economic potential of the Palestinian people is vital for stability and growth throughout the region. In this respect, the Conference will give the international community the opportunity to reaffirm and to translate into concrete terms its support for the Middle East peace process.

Thanks to the resolute and courageous actions of the parties to the conflict and the support provided by those of us wishing to contribute to the establishment of peaceful coexistence between all the peoples of the region, much has already been achieved in that process. We must not allow the enemies of peace to alter with acts of violence the course of events that, although they may be developing slowly, are developing in accordance with the principles that made possible the convening of the Madrid Conference in 1991 and that we hope will lead to a fair, comprehensive and lasting solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict in general and to the question of Palestine in particular.

Mr. Ould Ely (Mauritania) *(interpretation from French)*: The delegation of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania is happy to participate once again in the debate on the question of Palestine, on which considerable progress towards the goal of peace has been made over the past year.

The peace process initiated in Madrid in October 1991, which made possible the signing of the Declaration of Principles of 13 September 1993 and the agreement on the Gaza Strip and the Jericho Area of 4 May 1994, is being consolidated more and more, thanks to the foresight, tenacity and courage of Palestinian and Israeli leaders, who, despite diverse dangers and obstacles, have shown the world their determination to move forward in the quest for peace. The sudden and tragic passing of one of the protagonists of the peace process, the former Prime Minister of Israel, Mr. Yitzhak Rabin, far from shaking this determination, as the perpetrators of this heinous crime hoped, will, we are sure, lend strength to the supporters of peace. Mauritania will continue to support all those committed to this process, and we hope that peace can one day be established in this part of the Middle East — a comprehensive, just and lasting peace based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and on the total withdrawal of Israeli troops from occupied Arab territories, including Al-Quds Al-Sharif.

Inspired by those hopes, Mauritania welcomed the peace treaty of 26 October 1994 between Jordan and Israel, as well as the second implementation agreement of the Declaration of Principles, signed on 28 September 1995 in Washington, which envisaged, among other things, the implementation of the autonomy agreements in the rest of the West Bank and the holding of general, democratic Palestinian elections on 20 January of next year.

The remarkable progress in the peace process and in Israeli-Arab relations, however significant, should not divert us from the ultimate goal of the process, which remains the establishment of a just and lasting peace throughout the entire Middle East region. That is why we still hope to see the Israeli-Syrian and the Israeli-Lebanese negotiations produce more positive results.

The United Nations, for its part, will have to play a more active and larger role in this process. As was recently demonstrated in South Africa, a firm resolute commitment can help overcome major obstacles on the road to peace. We welcome the work done by the Special Coordinator and his personnel, who have spared no effort to bring about and consolidate peace. Their contribution will be crucial in coordinating the economic and social assistance provided by the United Nations to Palestinians throughout the occupied territories.

In paying tribute to the activities and efforts of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and its Chairman, Ambassador Cissé, we wish to express the hope that the Committee will continue to play the role assigned to it by the

General Assembly until the rights of the Palestinian people have been fully restored.

The climate of communication and dialogue that has emerged in this part of the Middle East since the beginning of the peace process, and whose practical results were seen at the Amman meeting last month, should spur the international community to redouble its efforts to bring about a rapid conclusion of the peace talks. We remain convinced that the establishment of a just and lasting peace in this nerve-centre of the world will help usher in an era of cooperation and justice for the benefit of all the peoples of the world, and from this conviction comes our commitment to support those who are participating, from near or from far, in bringing about that peace so long awaited by all.

Mr. De Silva (Sri Lanka): I would like to thank Ambassador Kéba Birane Cissé, Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, for his statement introducing the report of the Committee.

Sri Lanka has consistently viewed the question of Palestine as the core of the Arab-Israeli conflict. We have always advocated a just and durable settlement. Sri Lanka has maintained that such a settlement requires, in essence, Israel's withdrawal from all occupied territories and the restoration of the inalienable national rights of the Palestinian people, including their right to self-determination and their right to a homeland of their own. There must also be a clear acceptance of the right of all States in the region to live in peace within secure and internationally accepted borders.

Since the historic breakthrough which came with the mutual recognition of Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization in 1993, Sri Lanka has followed events in the region with interest. The signing of the Israeli-Palestinian Interim Agreement on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, which includes provisions for self-government arrangements in the rest of the West Bank and for the holding of general democratic elections, is yet another important development in the peace process.

We welcome, and reaffirm our support of, these important and positive developments.

However, in spite of these developments, the peace process has been rendered more vulnerable by the tragic assassination of one of its principal architects, the late Prime Minister of Israel, Yitzhak Rabin. It is imperative that notwithstanding this shocking and deplorable event all parties involved continue to maintain the momentum generated by these agreements in order to ensure the smooth progress of the peace process.

While we recognize and appreciate the efforts made so far by various countries in helping the peace process move forward, we believe that the United Nations retains the permanent responsibility for the question of Palestine until a comprehensive and lasting solution is reached. It is essential that the peace process should receive the encouragement and support of the international community as a whole. In the construction of their State, the Palestinian people will need international assistance. The United Nations should mobilize the resources that will be needed for the reconstruction and rehabilitation of lands that become self-governing and free.

It is important that the United Nations play a more active and expanded role in the peace process and in the implementation of the Declaration of Principles.

Frequent travel restrictions imposed on Palestinians in the occupied territories and in the areas of self-rule have caused immense hardship for the Palestinian people and adversely affected their livelihood, since much of their economy is vulnerable. Although the closures may be proclaimed for reasons of security, the Israeli authorities should do their utmost to minimize the economic hardships endured by the people in the occupied territories as a result of such closures. The continued pursuit of the land confiscation and settlement policy of the Israeli Government not only has been contrary to Israel's obligations, but has also adversely affected the peace process. At the same time, there have been acts of violence aimed at disrupting the peace process. The groups that remain outside the peace negotiations on Palestine should be urged to recognize the wishes of the Palestinian people for a peaceful solution to the complex issues of the Palestinian question.

We note that the parties have indicated their firm commitment to the implementation of the 1995 agreements in good faith, in full accordance with an agreed timetable. We hope that the implementation of these agreements will continue without interruption until a permanent settlement is reached on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973).

Mrs. Hoang Thi Cu (Viet Nam): We are here today to reaffirm our unflinching support for the Palestinian people's legitimate cause — that is, to secure

their inalienable right to self-determination and independence. We join the international community in welcoming the new and important progress achieved in the Middle East peace process in the past year.

We note with satisfaction that the peace process initiated in Madrid in 1991 has continued despite many difficulties and obstacles. The signing in September 1993 of the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements by the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and Israel created a dramatic turning-point in the search for peace in the Middle East, enabling the Palestinian people to take their first steps towards independence and opening new possibilities for cooperation between peoples of the region. The conclusion in September this year of the Israeli-Palestinian Interim Agreement on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip provided for the establishment of Palestinian interim self-government arrangements on the West Bank and in the Gaza Strip. It is now essential to implement these agreements. This will require great efforts on the part of all parties concerned as well as the contribution of the international community. In this regard, we are very concerned by the acts of violence that have brought death and suffering to innocent people, arousing the concern and drawing the condemnation of peoples throughout the world. We hope that these acts will soon cease.

The Government and people of Viet Nam have been following very closely and with great interest the evolution of the situation in the Middle East, in particular the question of Palestine. In this regard, my delegation wishes to commend the good work done by the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and the Division for Palestinian Rights. The report of the Committee (A/50/35) presents us with an overall range of activities carried out by the United Nations system for the promotion of a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the question of Palestine, the core of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

In the light of the new developments in the peace process, it is of great importance for the United Nations to maintain its permanent responsibility with respect to the question of Palestine until it is resolved in all its aspects. We believe that a just and peaceful final settlement to the question of Palestine must be based on Security council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). Therefore, there is a need for the full engagement of the United Nations in the peace process and in the process of building Palestinian self-government institutions, as well as in providing technical and economic assistance to the Palestinian people in all needed fields.

In this connection, we support the recommendations concerning the Committee's mandate that are contained in the Committee's report. We are of the view that the Committee and the Division for Palestinian Rights should continue their endeavours for the achievement of a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East. We share the view expressed by the Permanent Observer of Palestine at a recent meeting of the Committee that the Palestinian people need the Committee now more than ever in their efforts to realize their inalienable rights, particularly the right to self-determination.

The Government and people of Viet Nam strongly believe that, with their tradition of undaunted struggle and with the deep sympathy and unswerving support of the international community, the Palestinian people, under the leadership of the PLO, will attain final success in the near future.

Ms. Zafra Turbay (Colombia) (*interpretation from Spanish*): The International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People is an extremely significant occasion. The Government of Colombia is particularly enthusiastic about participating in this commemoration.

Colombia has been following with the greatest interest the developments in the process that begun in Madrid in 1991, which holds out the promise of a peaceful and negotiated solution to the conflict that has plagued the Middle East for so long.

My country supports the establishment of a Palestinian State in the region, in the context of coexistence and mutual respect between the States of the region and the genuine exercise of their rights by the Palestinian people.

The Heads of State or Government of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, meeting last October in the city of Cartagena, paid special attention to the Palestinian question in their discussions, in the light of the position traditionally taken by the Movement.

I wish to highlight the following paragraphs of the draft final document of the Conference, which relate to this issue. The Heads of State or Government

"reaffirmed their unflinching support for the legitimate struggle of the Palestinian people to secure respect for its inalienable rights to self-determination and independence and reiterated their demand for the withdrawal of Israel from all occupied Palestinian and other Arab lands, including Jerusalem.

"They pointed out that the responsibility of the United Nations in this matter should continue until the Palestinian people are able to exercise their inalienable right to self-determination, until an independent and sovereign State is established within its national territory and until the problem of refugees is settled in conformity with human rights instruments and the relevant resolutions of the United Nations. They therefore insisted on the need for the General Assembly to reaffirm, at its fiftieth regular session, its position on the major aspects of a definitive peace settlement, including the status of Jerusalem, the illegal settlements and the refugees. They regretted Israel's decision to confiscate Palestinian land and property in Jerusalem as well as its attempts to alter the religious and historical character of the Holy City. In this respect, they reaffirmed all Security Council and General Assembly resolutions related to Jerusalem and considered the Israeli actions contrary to these resolutions as null and void. They voiced serious concern at the obstacles to the implementation of the Agreements. They called for the full and scrupulous implementation of the Agreements and, in particular, of the provisions of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973), 465 (1980) and 478 (1980). They underlined the need for the mechanism dealing with the issue of Palestine set up by the General Assembly to continue to operate effectively. The Heads of State or Government expressed their support for the call made by the Jerusalem Committee, meeting in Ifrane, Morocco on 16 and 17 January 1995, to the Security Council, in particular to the two sponsors of the peace conference, to take the necessary measures to compel Israel to desist from establishing any settlements, from attempts at Judaization and from any other geographic or demographic changes in the Holy City of Jerusalem; and to comply with the agreements and conventions providing for the preservation of the Palestinian institutions and the Islamic and Christian holy sites in the city of Jerusalem, in implementation of the relevant Security Council resolutions.

"They stated that the Declaration of Principles, signed in Washington on 13 September 1993, the Interim Agreement on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip of 28 September 1995 and the establishment of the Palestinian Self-Government Authority constitute a new step in the efforts taken by Palestine and Israel.

"They considered that the arrangements relating to the establishment of Palestinian interim self-government should be widened quickly so that the Declaration of Principles could be implemented as quickly as possible throughout the occupied territories, with a view to securing the inalienable right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and to the establishment of a Palestinian State.

"In this context, they welcomed the conclusion in Taba, Egypt, of the Agreement on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, signed in Washington by President Arafat and the Israeli Prime Minister, as an important and substantial step towards the fulfilment of the national rights of the Palestinian people. They expressed the hope that further vigorous steps would be taken for the complete Israeli withdrawal from all the Arab territories occupied in 1967 in order that comprehensive peace and common prosperity would prevail throughout the region.

"They concurred with the Secretary-General that in order to sustain support for the Declaration of Principles and the Interim Agreement on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, it would be essential to promote economic and social development in the occupied Palestinian territories. In this context, they called upon the participants in the Conference to Support Middle East Peace, which took place in Washington on 1 October 1993, to deliver the assistance pledged, which is vital for the establishment of peace."

In this way the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries reaffirmed its unequivocal and long-standing support for the Palestinian people, in the hope that its just aspirations will soon be fulfilled as a result of its unswerving and exemplary struggle, which the Movement endorses.

Mr. Alakwaa (Yemen) (*interpretation from Arabic*): Despite the complexity of the situation in the Middle East and its multifarious dimensions, we believe that the Palestinian question, considered by the Secretary-General in document A/50/725-S/930, is at the heart of the conflict in the region and it gives us pleasure today, after

half a century of handling by the United Nations and by the international community as a whole of this question, to witness the progress the question has made towards a final solution.

We welcome the principal Declaration of Principles and all the subsequent steps and, positive developments on the road to peace; in particular, the Second Interim Agreement to implement the Declaration of Principles on the West Bank and Gaza and to expand Palestinian self-government.

We consider that to be a positive step towards enabling the Palestinian people to enjoy its right to self-determination within the framework of the relevant Security Council resolutions, in particular 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). We believe that, in compliance with those resolutions, the Israeli forces should withdraw from the Palestinian territories those forces have occupied since 1967, the problem of the refugees should be resolved and the Israeli settlements built after 1967 should be dismantled. There should be no infringement of the status of Al-Quds, as it has been agreed to postpone this issue at a later stage. We call upon all States concerned to abide by Security Council resolution 478 (1980) and to refrain from transferring these embassies to Al-Quds. We also call for the implementation of Security Council resolutions concerning the Syrian Golan and South Lebanon. Finally, we call for making it possible for the United Nations to perform a role that would be commensurate with its responsibilities and with the efforts it has been making for about five decades. This would be achieved by enabling the United Nations to participate in the implementation of the Declaration of Principles and in the peace process as a whole. We call upon the United Nations and the international community in general to continue to provide assistance to the Palestinian Authority in order for the Authority to face up to the conditions of economic deterioration, the prevalent poverty and unemployment and to rebuild its economic and social institutions.

In conclusion, we commend the efforts of the Committee in preparing its report (A/50/35).

Mr. Rodríguez Parrilla (Cuba) (*interpretation from Spanish*): The item entitled "Question of Palestine" has been on the agenda of the General Assembly for many years. Consideration of this item at the fiftieth session is particularly important and significant in view of the special background against which it is set, namely a constantly evolving and changing regional peace process.

The Palestinian people are at a crucial moment in their history. It is therefore vital to ensure recognition of the right of the Palestinians to their own State with Jerusalem as its capital and to exercise their inalienable right to self-determination. Likewise, it is essential today, as never before, to end Israeli domination in the occupied territories and to ensure that the provisions of the Declaration of Principles, the Cairo Agreement, the Agreement on Self-Government for the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, and all the subsequent implementation agreements are respected and fulfilled in letter and in spirit, together with the terms and phases of the peace process as endorsed in those international instruments.

At the same time, we must ensure the greatest possible political, legal and moral support by the United Nations for the cause of the Palestinian people and all the peoples of the occupied Arab territories and for the peace process in the Middle East. The General Assembly and its subsidiary organs that are involved in the question of Palestine must continue to strive to help eliminate all the obstacles standing in the way of a just and lasting peace in the region. In this respect, the contribution of those organs continues to be decisive in preventing the proliferation of Israeli settlements in the occupied territories, and in preventing violence, repression and the violation of the human rights of the Palestinian people.

The question of Palestine is the core of the conflict in the Middle East. The existence of a climate of *détente* and negotiation for a fair peace in Palestine would serve as a catalyst for the quest for a just, comprehensive and lasting solution to the conflict as a whole. In this respect, we welcome the peace agreement signed by Jordan and Israel and we call for Israel's withdrawal from the occupied Syrian Golan and from the occupied territories in southern Lebanon. Cuba supports the activities of the Permanent Representatives of Senegal and Malta in their capacity as Chairman and Rapporteur respectively of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People. This Committee, of which Cuba has the honour of being a member, is doing significant work, which the United Nations should support and strengthen because that is part of its mandate and its objectives.

Our delegation would also like associate itself with the statement by Colombia, as Chairman of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries.

The Palestinian people and the peoples of the Middle East require of the Committee and of the United

Nations that they play an effective role, a role of true commitment to the peace process, in which the international community has placed its hope. Cuba is ready to continue to do its utmost to contribute to this objective.

Mr. Abdellah (Tunisia) (*interpretation from Arabic*): The United Nations has been seized of the question of Palestine since it adopted the partition resolution in 1947. That resolution provided for the establishment of two States, one Arab and one Israeli, in Palestine. The successive resolutions of the United Nations laid the foundations for settling the Arab-Israeli conflict. It is, therefore, natural for the United Nations to follow the negotiations between the Palestinians and Israelis until such time as those resolutions are implemented. In this manner, it will have discharged its responsibility towards the Palestinian people and will have contributed to the establishment of peace and stability in the Middle East.

The peace efforts in the Middle East have continued over the past year and have achieved encouraging progress, in particular the signing by the Palestinian Interim Self-Governing Authority and the Israeli Government on 28 September 1995 of the Interim Agreement on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, which provides, *inter alia*, for the extension of self-government arrangements to the rest of the West Bank and the holding of free democratic Palestinian elections.

Tunisia has supported the peace process ever since it began in Madrid four years ago. It has participated regularly in the multilateral negotiations and hosted a number of meetings of the specialized working groups and of the committee on coordination of multilateral negotiations. Tunisia, therefore, welcomes the Israeli-Palestinian agreements that have been reached to date as steps towards the full implementation of the Declaration of Principles and in accordance with the agreed timetable. Those measures will strengthen the foundations of Palestinian self-government and lay the groundwork for the implementation and exercise of the legitimate national rights of the Palestinian people, foremost among which are the rights of return, of self-determination and of establishing that people's independent State on its territory, with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital.

Holy Al-Quds is part and parcel of the Palestinian territories that have been occupied by Israel since 1967 and is subject to Security Council resolution 242 (1967), which applies as much to Jerusalem as to rest of the Palestinian territories. The annexation of Al-Quds is illegal, as are the measures taken by the Government of Israel to alter its demographic composition. In this respect, we wish to remind anew of Security Council resolution 478 (1980) on the City of Al-Quds, which rejects the so-called "basic law" on the City of Jerusalem and calls upon those States that have established diplomatic missions at Jerusalem to withdraw such missions from the Holy City. We call upon all Member States to comply with that resolution. The measure that aims at moving the United States Embassy to Al-Quds contravenes international legality, runs counter to United Nations resolutions and even contradicts the Declaration of Principles. Moreover, it constitutes a stumbling block on the road to peace. We highly value the reasoned position taken by the United States Administration in this regard.

The importance of any agreement between the parties must be gauged by the extent to which it is implemented and translated into reality. While we note the Israeli authorities' declaration of readiness to continue to implement the provision of the Interim Agreement of 28 September, we believe that compliance with the agreed timetable is extremely important, given the enormous significance of the forthcoming elections of January 1996 in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip to the credibility of the peace process.

Peace in the Middle East is an integral indivisible whole. While we note with satisfaction the conclusion of a peace treaty between Jordan and Israel in 1994, we strongly urge the parties to make progress on the bilateral tracks between Israel and Syria and Israel and Lebanon towards the achievement of full withdrawal from the Golan Heights and southern Lebanon within the framework of a just, lasting and comprehensive solution based on the principle of "land for peace", Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978) and other relevant international resolutions. These resolutions contain the basic principles for the establishment of peace in the region, foremost among which is Israel's withdrawal from all the Arab territories occupied since 1967. It was on the basis of those principles that the peace process was launched at Madrid. We call upon Israel to adopt a fresh, forward-looking attitude with regard to its security and its relations with its neighbours with a view to making progress towards the desired peace and to turning a new leaf of cooperation amongst the countries and peoples of the region.

As the international community celebrates the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations, my delegation wishes to pay tribute to the important role played by our

Organization in the establishment of the basic principles that today constitute the political and legal terms of reference for the peace efforts. In this regard, we should like to note the work of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People to increase international awareness of the just nature of the Palestinian cause.

I also take this opportunity to pay tribute to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East for its great services. It has a great responsibility in this transitional stage for improving the living conditions of the refugees and for enabling the Palestinians to take responsibility for their own affairs following the transfer of power to the Palestinian Interim Self-Governing Authority. The Agency therefore deserves all financial and moral support if it is to continue to carry out its tasks until such time as the refugee question is settled in a manner that would be consistent with General Assembly resolution 194 (III).

I also wish to express my appreciation for the continuous efforts of the Department of Public Information in promoting awareness of the question of Palestine and the peace efforts in the region. Those efforts should continue in order to keep the world abreast of all new developments in this regard.

The deterioration of socio-economic conditions in the West Bank and Gaza Strip is cause for deep concern to us, in particular in view of the measures taken to limit the freedom of movement of Palestinian labourers. The Palestinian Interim Self-Governing Authority must also have sufficient financial means to enable it to discharge its responsibilities. To that end, and in view of the paucity of resources and the lack of basic infrastructure in the self-government areas, it is incumbent upon the international community to intensify its economic and financial support for development projects that would raise the citizens' standards of living.

In this regard, we wish to reaffirm the importance for the many donor countries that made pledges to honour those pledges which accompanied every step of the peace process as their economic importance is not less than that of the political aspects of the peace process; indeed, they are fundamental to its success. In this connection, the United Nations specialized agencies play an important role that deserves every support and encouragement so that they may continue their development work on behalf of the Palestinian people.

We welcome the efforts made to organize international political and financial conferences to lend assistance to the Palestinians, such as that held in Washington, D.C., in early October 1993. We have supported and endorsed the efforts made to establish relations of regional cooperation and development mechanisms in the region. In this regard, the economic conference held in Casablanca, Morocco, in the autumn of 1994 and the economic summit held in Amman in October 1995 have been important steps towards the desired regional cooperation which will reach its full dimensions with the establishment of a just and comprehensive peace in the region.

Tunisia will continue to support the Palestinian people in the reconstruction phase, just as it has in its struggle for the restoration of its legitimate national rights. We shall spare no effort in contributing, both bilaterally and in the multilateral context, to the reconstruction of the Palestinian economy and to the requirements of development. This is a major task that requires concerted international efforts in order for the Palestinian people to be able to enjoy peace, security and well-being like any other people in the Middle East.

Mr. Elaraby (Egypt) (*interpretation from Arabic*): Once again the General Assembly considers the item entitled "Question of Palestine", which has been on the United Nations agenda for about 50 years — the lifetime of the international Organization. Ever since, this question has taken up a considerable portion of the activities and deliberations of the United Nations.

Though the United Nations has not been able to enforce the implementation of the just solution that would guarantee the exercise by the Palestinian people of its legitimate national rights — it has succeeded in laying the ground rules for such a solution and has contributed to the creation of a climate that has made it possible to make the achievements that we now witness in the context of the peace process.

On the one hand, the consecutive resolutions adopted by the Security Council and by the General Assembly have established the firm foundations upon which any political settlement to the question of Palestine must be based. The most important of these are the non-admissibility of the acquisition of territory by force; the illegality of any measure, including the establishment of settlements, that would change the demographic nature of the occupied territories; and the right of the Palestinian people to exercise its legitimate national rights, including

the right to self-determination and the right of refugees to repatriation or compensation.

On the other hand, those resolutions which have continued to be adopted yearly by the different organs of the United Nations have created a world public opinion that has been supportive of the Palestinian people's rights and have stimulated the world's peoples into championing the cause of the Palestinian people and into standing in solidarity with it in its struggle for political independence.

The United Nations has also set up many bodies dedicated to assisting the Palestinian people. Those bodies have helped alleviate the suffering of that people under occupation and have helped the Palestinian refugees in coping with the unbearable conditions of life in the refugee camps.

Furthermore, the peace process which started with the Madrid Conference in 1991, has been based on the frames of reference furnished by the resolutions of the Security Council which have been the launching pad for negotiations between the parties concerned.

In view of the fact that the Palestinian-Israeli negotiations that are now taking place in the context of the present phase of the peace process are still dealing with the transitional phase wherein the Palestinian Authority will take over until the holding of elections and entry upon the final stage of the negotiations, which will begin in May 1996, and which will deal with the questions of Al-Quds, borders, refugees and settlements, it is important indeed to maintain the consistent international posture of support for the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, a posture that is based on the solid legal foundations which govern the legal status of all these issues until such time as the negotiating parties reach agreement on such issues in the context of the final phase of negotiations.

In this respect, reference must be made to the consistent position of the international community on the issue of Al-Quds. This position has been based on solid legal foundations that have been affirmed and reaffirmed by the General Assembly and the Security Council in numerous resolutions of which I mention in particular Security Council resolution 478 (1980), which determines that all the legislative and administrative measures adopted by Israel with the aim of annexing or altering the character and status of the Holy City are null and void. The same resolution calls upon all Member States not to recognize those Israeli measures and not to move their embassies in Israel to the Holy City.

The overwhelming majority of States have abided by this resolution, and we call in particular on the United States of America, as sponsor of the Middle East peace process, to continue to respect the clear international legal position on this question and, regardless of any pressures, to refrain from taking any action towards transferring the United States embassy to Al-Quds. To demand or to implement such a measure will not only constitute a serious breach of international law and a clear violation of Security Council resolutions but would constitute also a serious threat that may undermine the entire peace process.

The agreement on ending the Israeli occupation of the Gaza Strip and part of the West Bank is a great achievement in the context of the peace process, which has been making steady progress since the signing in Washington on 15 September 1993 of the Israeli-Palestinian Declaration of Principles which has chartered the way towards restoring the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people.

We have witnessed recently the signing in Washington on 28 September 1995 of the Interim Agreement on the West Bank and Gaza Strip according to which the Israeli forces will withdraw from the Arab cities of the West Bank and the Palestinian people will exercise the right to general elections in a situation free of occupation so that it may manage its own affairs. This first but considerable step towards the national independence for which all Palestinians have struggled has been made possible through the Palestinians' opting for peace and for negotiations as a means for regaining their legitimate national rights.

It was Egypt that pioneered the charting of the road to peace in the Middle East. This has been an arduous road that proved to be full of problems, and the accumulated residue of long years of conflict. Therefore, we in Egypt call upon the international community to stand beside the Palestinian people now more than at any time in the past, and to support the Palestinian people as it takes its first steps on the road to peace.

The Palestinian people, at this important juncture in its history, at the threshold of regaining its legitimate national rights, as it prepares to exercise some of those rights on part of its land, is in need of every possible assistance in all political, economic and other fields. There is no doubt that the United Nations, as representative of the international community, shoulders a special responsibility towards the question of Palestine,

and that its various bodies concerned with this question, especially the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, embody the Organization's efforts to discharge that responsibility.

In this respect, we wish to commend the Committee's development of its *modus operandi* in line with the development of the peace process with the aim of responding to the needs of the Palestinian people in the present transitional period. In this respect the delegation of Egypt wishes to extend its thanks and deep appreciation to the Committee's Chairman, Ambassador Kéba Cissé, to the members of the Committee.

We also wish to pay tribute to the positive and vital role of the Special Coordinator in the Occupied Territories, Mr. Larsen, who has made use of the vast experience of the United Nations bodies in the various areas of assisting the Palestinian people during the transitional period. We especially welcome the report prepared by the Coordinator on United Nations strategies and projects in six areas of the Palestinian economy, namely education, the creation of job opportunities, health, infrastructure, housing, institution-building and the role of the private sector. In this connection, we should like to underscore the importance for the donor countries to honour their pledges to assist the Palestinian people and for additional resources to be provided for projects that would promote the growth of the Palestinian economy towards self-sufficiency.

Despite all the aforementioned achievements in the peace process, we must always be aware of the difficulties that lie ahead. There must be full commitment by all parties to implement the agreements already reached and determination to continue the peace process on both the Palestinian and the Israeli sides. The questions on the agenda of final negotiations are extremely difficult and require determined political will that puts the desire for peace above the desire for expansion and depends on reconciliation and moderation, rather than on confrontation, extremism and violence. We are fully confident that the supporters of peace in the Middle East, whether in the Arab countries or in Israel, are in the overwhelming majority and that their voice will be heard very clearly indeed by the whole world.

Mr. Dlamini (Swaziland): On behalf of His Majesty the King, the Indlovukazi and the entire nation of the Kingdom of Swaziland, allow me again to express our deepest grief over the sad events that have recently befallen the State of Israel, where they lost a son, a leader and a father. We are joining all the nations of the world to say: May Almighty God sustain them.

On behalf of my delegation, I welcome this opportunity to address the Assembly on agenda item 42.

The report of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People is reflective of the road that has been traversed towards the attainment of peace in the Middle East. Obviously, no path of success is ever smooth — hence, the very sad events, indeed tragedies, that have been experienced in the Middle East.

The Kingdom of Swaziland, like other nations, has been observing with keen interest the development of the question of the Middle East. We want to express our gratitude and support for all the United Nations efforts and measures to bring a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement to the Middle East, and we would continue to urge all parties to support such initiatives in the region.

Swaziland will continue to advocate the policy of dialogue between and among all parties and to urge them to put aside the weapons of war. We hold the view that the noble and golden principle of peace can be attained only with the support of all the Member States of the United Nations. It is ever true that no one can win peace through confrontation, only through dialogue. Those who do not realize the need for peaceful dialogue should know that they are the enemies of peace.

My delegation fervently hopes that all peace accords and treaties signed so far will subsist for ever and, indeed, give birth to other peace accords.

As Members of the United Nations we have a duty to encourage the parties directly concerned with the question of peace in the Middle East. Let us support all efforts that will stabilize peaceful measures and refrain from unrewarding condemnations of any of the parties involved. Let us give credit for what has been achieved. We can demonstrate this by promoting resolutions at the United Nations that are far different from those of the past, especially when there was no way open for dialogue.

I want to confirm that peace is an expensive commodity, and if we want to attain it, it is necessary that we as Members of the United Nations change our attitudes, change the way we articulate with regard to this delicate commodity of peace. We must encourage the

State of Israel to remain unswerving in its commitment to honour all the undertakings it has so far pledged to fulfil. We must encourage all the parties in the region that have yet to take part in this endeavour and appeal them to cool tempers and to engage the appropriate gear, the gear of peace.

Mr. Al-Ni'mah (Qatar) (*interpretation from Arabic*): Once again, the General Assembly considers the question of Palestine. This item has figured on the agenda of the United Nations for nearly 50 years. The question has reverberated throughout the world, it has been a source of world concern, it has added to the sufferings of mankind, inflicting as it does a gaping wound on the conscience of humanity. We have witnessed a people lost in the diaspora, suffering from injustice and drinking the bitter cup of alienation and oppression. This is a people that has proceeded along its difficult path, burying its many martyrs and beseeching the world for deliverance, but with no relief in sight. There has been no magic cure for those who have been made unable to see through the thick darkness of the present a glimmer of hope for the future.

Yet throughout the tragedy they have never lost heart or hope. With constant sacrifices, irrigating their soil with blood, they bore their pain with dignity and have continued, in their hearts, to sing paeans to the breaking dawn. Their painful memories and the agony of loss made them stronger. During their days, their years of darkness their only smile was brought on by the succour provided by the United Nations through the many resolutions it continued to adopt over the years in support of the Palestinian people and in defence of their rights. This was the supporting hand of the United Nations. Indeed, it could be said that the United Nations has ingrained Palestinian rights in the conscience of mankind and that the United Nations has made the conscience of Palestine a part of human rights.

At the same time, we know that recognizing rights is one thing and enforcing them is quite another. Enforcement is precisely what the United Nations was unable to achieve, but we acknowledge that the Organization succeeded in laying the foundations for a just solution that will guarantee exercise by the Palestinian people of their legitimate rights. The United Nations also contributed to creating a climate propitious for reaping the long-awaited fruits that are now ripening on the tree of the peace process.

Successive Security Council and General Assembly resolutions have clearly reaffirmed the solid bases on which any political settlement of the question of Palestine must rest. Foremost among those principles is the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by force and the illegality of measures leading to change in the character of the occupied territories. These elements apply to all the activities and projects relating to the settlements. Those resolutions have also reaffirmed the right of the Palestinian people to enjoy their legitimate national rights.

Proceeding from this, the United Nations, more than ever before, must ensure full compliance with those resolutions, which will give the Palestinian people hope for peace and confidence in the Organization and inspire them to pursue the path towards peace and to cling to the values, concepts and ideals of peace. The United Nations could thus give the struggling Palestinian people the optimism they need to mobilize their energies to regain all their legitimate national rights, in particular their legitimate right to self-determination and to the establishment on their own sacred soil of an independent State. This would also give the Palestinian people an incentive to contribute to the socio-economic development of all parts of their liberated homeland.

The United Nations must take the lead in coordinating international efforts with a view to focusing them on building institutions and infrastructure for the Palestinian national economy, which has been gravely damaged by the bitter years of occupation, which lasted for far too long in those territories. There is no doubt that the adoption of the relevant United Nations resolutions and, in particular, those of the Security Council contributed to the launching of the peace process at the Madrid conference. Those resolutions have become the most important frames of reference and the strongest possible foundation for negotiations between the parties concerned. Therefore, reaffirming the resolutions that have been and continue to be adopted by the United Nations and its organs will contribute to and support the mobilization of world public opinion in support of the rights of the Palestinian people. It will also mobilize the peoples of the world to continue to stand in solidarity with the Palestinian people until they attain the freedom and political independence they desire.

We are aware of the efforts of the United Nations and the bodies it has established to support the Palestinian people and help them ease the suffering, oppression and pain resulting from the heavy yoke of occupation, and to contribute to improving their standard of living. We fully appreciate the great, praiseworthy efforts made by the United Nations on the question of Palestine. With

gratitude, we express our appreciation for the work of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, and for the tireless efforts of its Chairman. We hail that Committee's rationalization of its working methods in order to keep pace with developments resulting from the peace process. This will enable the Committee to find new approaches and new ways to serve the Palestinian people and to meet its needs during this important transitional stage.

We also pay tribute to the tireless efforts made by the Special Coordinator in the Occupied Territories and his positive role in providing the Palestinian people with the services that would enable them to meet the new needs during this historic transitional period.

It gives me particular pleasure to pay tribute to the report prepared by the Special Coordinator's Office, containing the strategies and the projects of the United Nations in various fields, such as education, labour, health, housing, the establishment of the infrastructure, institution-building and the activation of the private sector's role.

The Palestinian people, in this very delicate and important stage of its glorious struggle for the restoration of all its legitimate national rights and for the exercise of its sovereignty on the liberated parts of its land, is, indeed, in need of all the support it can get and all the sincere international efforts to help it along this path. It needs the contributions of all peace-loving people, the people of goodwill and their assistance for the establishment of the Palestinian state and for the building of its national institutions in various fields — economic, political and social. In this regard, we reaffirm the importance we attach to the continued role of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). We urge the officials of the United Nations, and in particular the working group on the financing of UNRWA, to take the necessary measures to reduce the deficit in the Agency's budget without reducing the services it renders.

The State of Qatar, proceeding from the instructions of His Highness Sheikh Hamad bin-Khalifa Al-Thani, the Emir of Qatar, has constantly supported the struggle of the Palestinian people and their legitimate desire to establish a national entity that is dignified with their national identity and the establishment of their independent Palestinian state, with its capital, Al-Quds Al-Sharif. In this regard, my country, like all the other Islamic countries, believes that Al-Quds Al-Sharif has particular importance in any settlement for the Arab-Israeli conflict, in view of its particularly holy place in the hearts of Muslims and non-Muslims alike.

The special ramifications of that question were realized by the Council of Ministers in my country. Therefore, in order to make sure that the peace process continues without any hindrance and with a view to defusing the causes of tension in the region, the Council of Ministers voiced its opposition to and condemnation of any attempt to transfer embassies to the Holy City. The Council of Ministers reaffirmed anew the importance of compliance by the international community with Security Council 478 (1980) and all other relevant resolutions.

The State of Qatar reaffirms its intention to continue to contribute to the support of the efforts aimed at the establishment of a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the Middle East. It will continue to stand by what is right and just. It will continue its sincere efforts to help the Palestinian people to establish their independent state, which will release their energies and allow them to make their full contribution to the progress of the Middle East.

The liberation of the city of Jenin from occupation, and the initiation of withdrawal procedures from Nablus, the largest Palestinian city, are among the fruits of the peace process. It is our hope that this will be followed by the liberation of the rest of the Palestinian territories.

Yet, the achievements made so far in the context of the peace process continue to be fraught with danger and continue to be fragile. The questions on the agenda of negotiations on the final status are many and thorny. This delicate stage makes it incumbent upon all parties to show clear political will and a sincere desire for peace, to show understanding, moderation and wisdom, and to refrain from extremism, confrontation, the arrogance of power, and the ambitions of expansion. Such political will needs the support of all States, the two co-sponsors of the Middle East peace process, and, in particular, the United States of America, which must continue its good offices for the establishment of a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the Middle East. The United Nations must persist in its efforts until such time as the Palestinian people have achieved their desired objective — the establishment of their independent state with Al-Quds as its capital. This would contribute to the establishment of justice, stability, security and prosperity in the Middle East. These hopes of the region's peoples are supported by all the noble values enshrined in the United Nations Charter, and millions of peace-loving

people need such support in order to strengthen themselves when hard times befall them. They need this support in order to re-read the first alphabet of human civilization, which was created in the Middle East, whose vocabulary is based on peace, tolerance, cooperation and working together. This is the hope of the peoples of the Middle East — a hope the Holy Koran speaks of:

> "Nor would thy Lord be the one to destroy communities for a single wrong-doing if its members were likely to mend." (Sura 11, Verse 117); as does the Holy Bible: "and on earth peace and good will toward men." (Luke 2:14)

Mr. Kasanda (Zambia): The question of Palestine is a matter that has captured the attention of the international community since 1947, when it was first brought before the United Nations General Assembly.

Since then, the Palestinian people have continued to wage their struggle amidst many obstacles and much human suffering, for the restoration of their lands that are still under occupation.

Given these circumstances, my delegation wishes to applaud the progress that is being made in the ongoing Middle East peace process, which has now culminated in the signing of an Interim Agreement, also known as Oslo II, between the Government of Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) at Washington, D.C. on 28 September 1995. This development is one that deserves our collective support, as it is a positive expression of hope that the problems of the Middle East will one day be delivered from the recurring cycle of conflict which has characterized the political life of that region.

Zambia, as a member of the Non-Aligned Movement's Committee of Nine on Palestine, wishes to take advantage of this occasion to urge all parties to the recently concluded agreement to dedicate themselves to ensuring not only that the agreement is effectively implemented, but that it is also adequately translated into improving the living conditions of the inhabitants of the occupied territories. In this context, my delegation wholeheartedly welcomes Israel's withdrawal of its security forces from Jenin and it is our hope that greater progress will also be made in the remaining regions where, unfortunately, tensions still continue on a daily basis.

With regard to the release of Palestinian prisoners, as agreed upon by the two parties, we commend the steps Israel has already taken in this regard. However, we would still urge the Israeli Government to continue its efforts in this direction with greater vigour.

The issue of resettlement of the Palestinian refugees, who were scattered far and wide following the political instability in the Middle East, is a matter that requires urgent attention. The international community should therefore brace itself to assist in the return of such refugees and ensure that they are properly resettled in order to make it easy for them to begin their new life.

However, my delegation also wishes to commend the greater role that the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) is already playing in facilitating the return of refugees. None the less, given the mammoth task that the Agency has had to shoulder in providing protection as well as humanitarian assistance to the Palestinian refugees for so many years, its financial status has diminished a great deal in recent years, resulting in a deficit of $6 million by the beginning of 1995.

In addition, UNRWA's financial position has also worsened because the Agency is also heavily involved in the process of transferring its headquarters, which has been based in Vienna, to its new location in Gaza.

In conclusion, let me add that we look forward to the comprehensive resolution of the Middle East problem, so as to give the people of the region an opportunity to experience peace and prosperity.

Mr. Sengwe (Zimbabwe): It is my privilege and honour on behalf of my delegation to join today's speakers to address the question of Palestine and, as we did yesterday, mark the important occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. Since the adoption of General Assembly resolution 32/40 in December 1977, the international community has not wavered in its commitment to show its solidarity with the people of Palestine on that occasion. As in the past, Zimbabwe joins the international community in marking that day.

The signing of the historic Declaration of Principles in September 1993 opened a wide vista of opportunities for progress in the Middle East peace process. Although the implementation phase of the Declaration of Principles has admittedly been slow in keeping pace, the peace process in general has since gathered unprecedented momentum.

On 28 September this year, the world witnessed yet another positive step with the signing in Washington of the accord extending Palestinian autonomy in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. What we now hope to see soon is the speedy implementation of law and order and security arrangements to pave the way for the holding of Palestinian elections in those areas.

Those positive developments notwithstanding, Zimbabwe, together with all the peace-loving people of the world, has been shocked by the actions of the enemies of the peace process. The recent brutal assassination of one of the architects of a negotiated settlement and peace in that region, the late Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, is still fresh in our minds.

We have also witnessed with concern intra-party divisions within the respective negotiating teams — divisions that have in some cases manifested themselves in violent killings and other acts of brutality which in the end achieve nothing but to set the clock back and thereby stall the advance towards total Palestinian nationhood and peace in the Middle East.

Zimbabwe, however, takes heart from the fact that, despite these setbacks, the Palestinian and Israeli people, under their respective leaderships, have declared their full commitment to seeing the peace process through to the end. In that respect we stand firmly behind the current peace initiatives, which should lead to what we all pray will be a permanent and comprehensive peace in the whole region.

It is our earnest hope that the Palestinian and Israeli people will today draw further inspiration and commitment from the encouragement and political and moral support we all offer them.

The Acting President *(interpretation from Arabic):* In accordance with General Assembly resolution 3369 (XXX), I now call on the Observer of the Organization of the Islamic Conference.

Mr. Ansay (Organization of the Islamic Conference): On behalf of the General Secretariat of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), I thank the Assembly for the opportunity to speak once again during its present session. I do so today on agenda item 42, on the question of Palestine.

The report of the Secretary-General on the question of Palestine is before us in document A/50/725. The report is lucid, concise and clear, and I take this opportunity to express OIC's appreciation to the Secretary-General not only for the timely presentation of the useful material, but also for his continuing untiring efforts towards finding a just and honourable solution of the issue of Palestine. This is one of the longest standing issues on the Assembly's agenda, to which OIC attaches the greatest importance.

I take this opportunity also to pay tribute to the Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, His Excellency Ambassador Cissé of Senegal, for his sincere efforts in promoting the cause of the Palestinian people and also for convening yesterday the impressive meeting to commemorate the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People.

The Middle East peace process, launched about four years ago with the objective of achieving a just and comprehensive solution to the question of Palestine and the related conflict in the Middle East, continues to attract the strong support of the OIC. In the year that has passed since I addressed the General Assembly on this issue, the peace process has advanced a few steps forward. The signing of the treaty of peace between Jordan and Israel on 26 October 1994 and the signing of the Israeli-Palestinian Interim Agreement in Washington, D.C., on 28 September 1995 were the high points of these initiatives in this period. In this context, we are heartened by the recent withdrawal of Israeli forces from Jenin.

Following the withdrawal of Israeli troops from Gaza and Jericho and the assumption by the newly established Palestinian National Authority of its functions, the Palestinians have commenced the process of reconstruction and development. They now face the challenging tasks of reviving and modernizing national institutions, designing and developing both the human and the physical infrastructures, and rebuilding the economy by revitalizing agriculture, industry and trade and social services — all with extremely limited resources and formidable impediments. But those challenges cannot be dealt with freely until such time as all the Palestinian territories under illegal Israeli occupation, including the Holy City of Al-Quds Al-Sharif, are fully restored to the Palestinian people and their sovereignty is once again established over the entirety of what has been — and is legitimately — their land.

We are observing with keen interest the ongoing technical assistance of the United Nations and of its funds, programmes and agencies to the Palestinian National Authority and, through it, to the Palestinian people in Gaza and the West Bank, in their rehabilitation and reconstruction efforts. We are in particular mindful of the critical role of the United Nations Special Coordinator, Mr. Larsen, in supporting and facilitating these activities in what continue to be trying conditions. At this juncture I should like also to express our admiration of the role being played by Mr. Ilter Turkmen, the Commissioner General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees (UNRWA), and his staff in enabling the Palestinian refugees under their aegis to cope with their long-standing ordeal. We believe that with its vast experience and excellent dedicated staff UNRWA has a very significant role to play in the future consolidation of Palestine.

With a scarcity of resources, the task of the United Nations funds, programmes and agencies in furnishing the much-needed humanitarian and technical assistance to the Palestinian people in their reconstruction and development efforts is difficult enough. Adding to the international community's costs and frustrations is what can only be described as the non-cooperative attitude of the Israeli authorities, whose difficult bureaucratic formalities, designed to deal with the population of the occupied areas, are continuing to be enforced even after the conclusion of the peace agreements. Similar constraints, we are informed, are being experienced at the hands of Israeli authorities in the promotion of Palestinian trade, especially exports to countries beyond Israel.

These experiences are, at best, at variance with and, at worst, in gross violation of the spirit of compromise and cooperation that must now characterize all current and future dealings between the Palestinian and Israeli authorities in the implementation of the peace agreements. This is all the more important in order to establish the credibility and practicality of the peace agreements already concluded and to generate confidence in the negotiations for future agreements.

We in the OIC would certainly want to continue to encourage and support the ongoing peace process and the conclusion and implementation of succeeding agreements within the framework of that process, but I must point out that this involves essentially a visible change of attitudes and practices. I say this because we would very much like to believe that the difficulties I have just cited are not the reflection of official Israeli policy, but only a neglected carry-over of the way the Palestinians were being dealt with before the conclusion of these. There is an urgent need for a change, and time is of the essence. The time is now.

I should like also to report briefly on some of the highlights of the Annual Coordination Meeting of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, held in New York on 2 October 1995, which reaffirmed the OIC's support for the peace process in the Middle East. It called for the continuation of support for the PLO and its National Authority in the ongoing negotiations in order to affirm the transfer of all powers and responsibilities, in all fields, in the occupied Palestinian territories to the Palestinian National Authority, to establish its authority over all the occupied Palestinian territories, including Al-Quds Al-Sharif. It also reaffirmed support for the inalienable national rights of the Palestinian people, including their rights to return, to self-determination, and to establish their independent State on their national soil, with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital; as well as support for the international programmes for economic, social and cultural development in the occupied territories.

The meeting called for support for the efforts aimed at implementing United Nations resolutions, particularly Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978), which stipulate Israel's withdrawal from all the Palestinian and Arab territories, including Al-Quds Al-Sharif, the occupied Syrian Golan Heights and the occupied Lebanese territories. It called upon the international community, particularly the Co-Chairmen of the Peace Conference, to persuade Israel not to carry out any geographic or demographic change in Al-Quds Al-Sharif during the interim phase that might jeopardize the outcome of negotiations on the final status of the city. It called for Israel to be forced to stop Jewish settlement in the occupied Palestine and Arab territories, including Al-Quds Al-Sharif and the occupied Syrian Golan Heights. It called also upon all States to refrain from moving their embassies and other forms of representational offices to Jerusalem pending the restoration of the occupied parts of the city of Al-Quds Al-Sharif to its rightful owner, the state of Palestine.

The meeting emphasized the need to exert efforts in all international forums to compel Israel to release the detainees, bring back the deportees and halt mass punishments. It requested the international community and the Security Council to persuade Israel to comply with the United Nations resolutions, in particular Security

Council resolution 487 (1981), to accede to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and implement the resolutions of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) that call for subjecting all Israeli nuclear facilities to the International Atomic Energy Agency system of comprehensive safeguards.

The meeting also reaffirmed that it was necessary for the UNRWA mission for the Palestinian people to continue and for the Reconciliation Committee, in cooperation with UNRWA and the States concerned, to prepare a comprehensive census of Palestinian refugees and their properties.

On the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, which was commemorated yesterday, I bring to you, Sir, on behalf of the Secretary-General of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, His Excellency Mr. Hamid Algabid, a message of peace, a call for reason and an appeal for the extension of all support to the Palestinian people to help alleviate their sufferings caused by long years of occupation and repression and the denial of the exercise of their national human rights. Towards this goal the resolve behind the ongoing peace process must be maintained, and the pace of its progress must be accelerated through the united efforts of the international community in assisting the Palestine National Authority to gain fuller and firmer control over all its nation-building tasks. These would include creating and reviving national institutions, rebuilding and expanding the infrastructure, revitalizing the economy and creating and expanding social services, so that the Palestinian people may re-emerge as a proud, productive, independent, sovereign nation, with its own flag flying over all its territory, including Al-Quds Al-Sharif, and with full status as a Member State of the United Nations.

In the current peace process, the prospects of achieving peace and prosperity for all countries of the Middle Eastern region, including Israel, are within sight. It is incumbent upon the international community represented in this great world Organization to ensure that the opportunity is taken, not lost.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Arabic*): I wish to inform members that the General Assembly will consider draft resolutions submitted under agenda item 82 at a later date, to be announced in the *Journal*.

The meeting rose at 12.10 p.m.